

Leader of Raid on Panthers Alters Testimony on 1st Shot

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CHICAGO, Jan. 12—The Chicago police sergeant who led a raid on a Black Panther apartment last month today changed his version of who he thinks fired the opening shot.

Sgt. Daniel R. Groth testified that he now believes the first shot was fired by Mark Clark, a Panther organizer from Peoria, Ill., who was killed in the pre-dawn raid on Dec. 4.

Earlier police accounts, including Groth's, have contended that a 17-year-old girl, Brenda Harris, began the shooting with a shotgun blast as several officers came crashing into a hallway outside the apartment where she was lying on a bed.

Police contend the shotgun blast came through a door from inside the apartment, opening an extended "shoot-out."

Groth said he changed his mind after viewing a newspaper photograph of a purported shotgun hole in the hallway and after consulting with another member of the raiding party.

The new version has the effect of bringing the police account more in line with the location of Clark's body and of Miss Harris in the apartment.

Had Miss Harris fired the shot, it presumably would have traveled almost directly into a wall opposite the door. There are no marks of gunfire there.

There is one mark, possibly a bullet hole, high up on a section of the wall near the rear of the hallway.

Groth said today he now thinks that mark was made by a deer slug from Clark's shotgun fired from a position near the front of the apartment.

Body Behind Door

Clark, in the police version, was killed by two shots fired by a policeman who burst into the apartment. Clark's body was found slumped almost directly behind the door.

Groth's testimony came during his fourth day on the witness stand at a special inquest in the fatal shooting of Clark and Fred Hampton, who was chairman of the Illinois Black Panther party.

Widespread doubts about the police version and public pressure from the black community prompted the inquest. One major cause of doubt was

the inability of police to prove a shot had been fired from inside the apartment.

Groth also sought to explain why he led the raid at 4:45 a.m. when the apartment was occupied by nine sleeping persons.

He has acknowledged that he once considered staging it at 8 p.m. the previous evening, when he knew the occupants would be at a Black Panther political meeting. He had a search warrant authorizing seizure of illegal weapons.

Groth testified today at a special inquest that he was concerned most about the safety of his men, people in

the neighborhood and anyone living in the apartment.

He explained that he knew Panthers would be meeting only a half-block away at 8 p.m. on the night of Dec. 3.

Asked by special Deputy Coroner Martin S. Gerber if he was worried that the political meeting of Panthers might be alerted to the raid if staged the previous evening, Groth answered, "Yes sir."

Later, a police training document was introduced to show that department regulations recommend staging such raids at a time when occupants would be sleeping or just waking up.